



Nurturing Your Child's Self-Esteem

One of the most important things we can do as parents is to help our children develop positive feelings about themselves. Children with good self-concepts are more likely to grow into happy and productive members of society.

Parents have a lot to do with how children see and feel about themselves. Providing a warm, loving relationship filled with support, encouragement, and interest in the child, helps children feel good about themselves. Children who grow up with constant criticism, scoldings or discouraging remarks are not likely to see themselves as worthy and good people.

There are many things that parents can do to help children develop good self-concepts. Here are a few suggestions

Communicate respect and confidence in your children. Give them opportunities to make choices when possible. Provide opportunities to make a contribution. Assign them household chores they can handle, such as making their bed, helping to sort laundry or setting the table.



Be sure your children know you love them— even when their behavior is not acceptable. Children need to know they are loved and valued for who they are, not just what they do. Accent their feelings while helping them learn appropriate ways to express and handle negative ones. Teach your child, for example, that it's OK to be angry and to use words to talk about what is bothering him or her, but it's not OK to hurt others.

Praise your child...thoughtfully. Be genuine and specific with praise. Children recognize empty compliments or insincere praise. Think about what you are teaching your child through the things you praise. For example, you teach your child to value effort if you praise hard work as well as praising your child's achievements.

Give your child opportunities to explore and learn. Take trips together, to the supermarket, the library, and places in the community. Mastering new situations helps children develop confidence. Trips together also show children that

you value spending time with them.

Source: Van Horn, J. Self-concept is important. Part I and Part II. Penpages, April 1994.

“Who I Am!” Activities

Activities focusing on your children—their growth, their ideas, their preferences—can be a fun way to talk about these things together. Time spent on an activity about your child also communicates how important and special he or she is to you.

Here are two suggestions for activities to try with your child.

This Is Me

Materials needed:

- A large (child-sized!) sheet of paper
- Nontoxic markers
- Children’s scissors
- Nontoxic paint

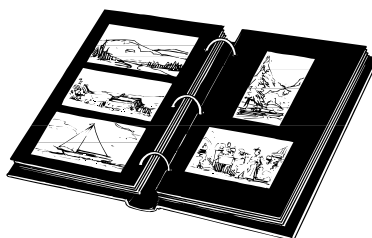


Directions: Have your child lie down on the large sheet of paper. Using a marker, trace the outline of your child’s body on the paper. You and your child can then cut out the silhouette you have drawn. Next your child may like to use the markers to draw his or her face on the head and paint to color in his/her clothes.

My Timeline

Materials needed:

- Poster board
- Photographs of your child
- Tape or glue
- Markers



Directions: Together you and your child can create his or her personal timeline. Get out a wide selection of pictures of your child at various ages. Let your child pick out ones he or she would like to put on the timeline. Attach the pictures to poster board, beginning with the youngest picture and continuing in chronological order.

Have your child describe the pictures, while you write captions beneath them, using his or her words.

Note: As with any activity, the primary idea is to have fun together. If your child is not interested in the idea, save it for another time. Instead, you and your child can explore together ideas for an alternate activity. Using your child’s interests and ideas as the basis for an activity may be the best way of all to show your child how much you value who he or she is!

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Keith L. Smith, Director, Ohio State University Extension.

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